Demeter Chastises Persephone
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Edited by Yu May

Persephone was coming home. That was all that mattered.

The months since her daughter was abducted to the underworld had felt like millennia.

In her rage, she could easily have "killed" Hades, if she got her hands on him. Hades was immortal, but she could still cut him into pieces, like Kronos had done to all his children before his son Zeus defeated him. Maybe she would steal a leaf from Zeus' book and chain Hades to a cliff and let a hawk tear out his favorite organs every day. Prometheus had been suffering that fate until just recently when Hercules rescued him.

In her anguish, Demeter had neglected her duties as goddess of plant life and the harvest. The result was famine for the Greek mortals, who got to share Demeter's misery.

Demeter had told the other gods that she was so distraught over loss, she simply overlooked little things like the mortals. She had realized, though, with a conniving smile, that this famine would be an excellent way to get Zeus' attention.

Zeus had been unwilling to cross his brother Hades, and even more hesitant to enrage his belligerent wife. Persephone was the child of an illegitimate relationship between Demeter and Zeus, and Hera always hen pecked Zeus whenever he tried to help out his former lovers or bastard children.

Once his mortal worshipers started dying of starvation, however, Zeus suddenly became more eager to help Demeter rescue her daughter.

Zeus had sent a messenger, Ascalaphus, to order Hades to release the girl he kidnapped, and Demeter could see him returning now, guiding Persephone out of the underworld.

Demeter ran to her daughter, and when they embraced, flowers burst from the ground in full bloom, and a young willow tree sprang out of the ground, covered in white blossoms. Persephone returned the embrace warmly, but Demeter could sense that her daughter was tense. Surely, her traumatic experience in Hades could explain this, right?

"What's the matter, dear? Did that brute Hades hurt you?"

"Actually," answered Persephone, who though over one hundred years old, was still a "teenager" among the gods, "Mr. Hades was quite a gentleman." She blushed a bit as she remembered all the attentions Hades showed her, then quickly tried to say something to keep her mother from suspecting she had developed a crush on her kidnapper. "Maybe he was a bit

cold, and there's that little thing about tormenting mortal souls for all eternity, but he was always perfectly pleasant towards me."

Demeter clicked her tongue in disapproval, "Tsk, tsk! You just forget about that awful man! You'll never be seeing him again!"

Ascalaphus started coughing into his fist. "Actually, ma'am," he interrupted in his dry voice, "Don't shoot the messenger, but Persephone sort of ate four pomegranate seeds right before I picked her up."

The thing about Greek gods is they had character flaws, and one of those flaws was they liked to shoot the messenger.

BAM!

Demeter turned Ascalaphus into an owl, and he fluttered away, hooting. And that's an end of his part in this tale.

Persephone looked aghast. "Mom! Why did you do that? He just told you the truth."

For months, Demeter had gone between grieving over her loss and raging like a mother tiger whose cub was threatened. Some of that pent up maternal instinct was flaring up right now.

"You ATE food in the underworld! Do you have any idea what that means! Those who eat or drink in the underworld are never allowed to leave!"

"Mooooom, it was just four pomegranate seeds," said Persephone, giving her mother one of those condescending "you don't know what you're talking about" looks.

The last time Persephone saw her mom like this is when Orpheus was in concert and all the teenage goddesses were going. Persephone ended up sneaking out, and her mother erupted like Pompeii. Demeter's temper had caused the global ice caps to melt a bit (all the Greek mortals had been sure it was a man-caused disaster.)

Persephone decided to calm her mother down with some common-sense, Socratic logic: "If that were true, I couldn't possibly be standing here, could I?"

Demeter, quickly growing impatient with her daughter's casual attitude towards this very serious situation, shot back, "I don't know how you're standing here right now, but you never should have eaten anything that man offered you! Where is–" Demeter looked around for the messenger, realized she had been too quick to transform him into an owl, and roared in rage. As she pulled out her cell phone, and dialed Zeus at Mt. Olympus, the willow tree behind her started to smolder.

It was a short conversation. Demeter could hear Hera throwing things at her husband at intervals. Zeus quickly explained that he had to strike a deal with his brother. Since Persephone ate food in the underworld, by law she should have been required to spend eternity there. However, since she ate four pomegranate seeds, he and Hades agreed that she could spend eight months of the year with her mother, but had to spend four months with Hades every year.

Zeus quickly hung up before he had to deal with an enraged mother on the phone as well as his irate wife in person.

The willow tree and every flower erupted in flame.

As the ashes died down, Demeter put away her phone and glared at her daughter. "You have to spend four months of the year, every year, in the underworld."

Persephone seemed to recall Hades saying something like that before she left, but she didn't remember everything. She had been distracted by thinking about his manly voice and dignified black beard. "Oh yeah, come to think of it. But I don't mind. It'll sort of be like summer camp, only during the whole winter!"

"And don't you think I'll mind? Or can't you be bothered to stop and think about how your decisions affect anybody but you and your feelings? We're going to be separated for four months, every year, for eternity!"

"I'll be with you for the other eight! That's twice the time I'll be spending with Mr. Hades!" Persephone was hurt by her mother's reaction. Wasn't her mother just happy enough to see her, regardless of the circumstances?

She wanted to retort by pointing out that if she and Hades got married (and have kids, two girls and one boy, Persephone had decided), how hard it was going to be to spend eight months of the year with her mother! But she thought it best to take it slow with the whole "I have a crush on Hades" thing, since her mother was probably a bit peeved at him still.

"That's not the point, young lady! I don't think you're understanding the problem here. I just endured the four worst months of my life. They were torment. They were torture. I felt like I would rather be a mortal and die, so that I could at least join you in the underworld. Just as I finish the most traumatic experience of my life, and think it's behind me forever, you're telling me that I get to go through it all over again. Forever! How can you have such an ambivalent attitude? How could you let that rat trick you so easily! You were minutes away from escaping him forever. Don't tell me you couldn't wait that long to satisfy your appetite!"

Now, it was Persephone's turn to be irate. Adults spent so much time talking about not having a "tone" in your voice, no matter what you said. Well, Demeter was using a tone of voice that made Persephone feel terrible.

Persephone wasn't a terribly selfish girl, no more so than most teenage goddesses (and really, could you blame a teenage goddess for thinking she was the center of the universe?).

Persephone genuinely felt sorry for her mother and had an idea of how painful an experience it must have been. She'd missed her mother too.

But, hey, fact was fact. They couldn't change things now. And Persephone had been tortuously hungry. How was she to know she was almost free?

Couldn't her mother at least look on the bright side of things? Persephone was now queen of the underworld. Before, she hadn't been queen of anything, which is hard for a teenage goddess. All the other students at Olympus High would poke fun at her for not being in charge of anything, calling her names like "Phosphorous," and "Phony purse," and Cupid never helped her land any of the cute boys she liked. Now, Persephone had a position, a *queen!* She was in a serious relationship with one of the Big Three: Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades!

All of this was going through Persephone's mind, and who could blame her if she didn't think, and reacted harshly to her mother's criticism?

"Maybe I'll go back there right now and eat the rest of the pomegranate, since you seem to think I'm such an idiot!"

The flames gave one last roar, and then died down, as Demeter tried to control herself. "Persephone, I don't think you're an idiot. I never said you were. I need you to promise me, right now, that you will never think of carrying out that childish threat."

Persephone wasn't as quick to control her temper as her mother, and she sensed that she had pushed a button. "How is it childish? Maybe I like Hades. Maybe I want to be his Queen and have kids. Maybe you just need to deal with the fact that I'm growing up and eventually, I'll have to leave the nest. I'm old enough to make some of these decisions for myself!" she declared proudly. Then she had a flashback. The last time she had said that was when her mother caught her returning from Orpheus' concert, and at that time…

No way! Her mother wouldn't do that? Would she?

It was raining a bit, because of her mother's sadness. The tree life and foliage had grown back again. Not quite as fast as it had earlier, but still at a miraculous speed. There weren't any flames. Her mother wasn't mad at her. Persephone sighed in relief. She was safe.

In actuality, Demeter was controlling her temper. It was her rule to never punish a child in anger (unlike that dreadful Aphrodite who had her son Cupid whipped mercilessly). The willow tree which had sprung up again aged, until it was fully grown.

"Last chance, baby. Promise me you'll never carry out that threat."

Persephone didn't know what to say. She saw where this was going, but was too scared to think straight. She certainly did not want to be punished like a little girl only 100 years old. But she was also felt guilty over the mean things she had said.

She just stood in silence.

Holding her daughter's hands in hers, lovingly, Demeter sat down, her back resting against the old tree, and guided her daughter across her lap.

A branch of the willow tree bent down and offered her a long, tough willow switch, perfect for her intent. She snapped it off, and in one motion, lifted her daughter's black toga up to her back and flicked the switch across her daughter's radiant back side.

For human children, a spanking may only last a minute or two, but for gods, it typically took days.

Demeter applied the switch for about two hours, and by the end, her daughter's bottom was only slightly pink.

"Baby, you said some things which hurt me. Even if you don't say you're sorry, I want you to know you're forgiven for those things. I'm also sorry for losing my temper and saying things which hurt your feelings. But I am not a bit sorry I spanked you. Now, what do you have to say for yourself?"

"I'm so sorry I was disrespectful, Mom," cried Persephone. "And I'm sorry I threatened that I'd... I hated being away from you, and I'd never cut myself away from seeing you. I won't eat anything more in the underworld. You have my word!"

"I trust you, Persephone," said her mother.

"Mom, are we done already?"

"Have you learned your lesson?"

"I think so but...I still feel terribly guilty."

"I just wanted you to give me your word. A little encouragement is all you needed. If you feel guilty about those disrespectful things you said, I can discipline you for each of those, or we can end it here. Tell me, Persephone, have you been punished enough?"

Persephone bit her lip. If she was honest with herself, Persephone knew her mother was letting her off easy. She hated being spanked, and she knew one word from her could end this. But she

also knew that the only way to earn her mother's trust and respect was to be honest. "No ma'am. I think I've earned a spanking to remember."

Though it pained her to punish her daughter, Demeter smiled with pride. "I couldn't agree more," she said with a sigh. With that, she began to apply the birch switch with increased vigor. After landing ten crisp strokes, Demeter began to lecture her daughter and punish her for each of her individual offenses.

"This [Swish!] is for leaving your chaperones and going off by yourself into the woods. I've explicitly told you not to do that in the past, but you deliberately [Whap!] disobeyed me [Thwap!] and that allowed you to be captured." Demeter added another fifty stinging blows to drive that first point home (for a goddess, though, that was more like getting five swats).

"And this [Thwip!] is for accepting food from him. [Flick! Shwick! Snap!!!] You should have known better than to give into the man who abducted you." Demeter delivered one hundred smarting spanks with the willow branch, which had grown to the size of a small cane in her hand, and was sprouting leaves. Only now was Persephone beginning to show her discomfort by squirming and squeaking as she felt each tingling smack across her divine behind.

"This, Persephone, is for giving me that arrogant look just after we were reunited and for speaking to me in that presumptive tone of voice." Demeter paused a moment, the switch held high. For this one, she would have to see a few tears to know that Persephone was regretting her attitude. The willow branch thickened and aged in her hand, until it was the size of a sapling tree and as weighty as a walking stick.

Persephone was growing curious about the delay and peeped over her shoulder. She wished she hadn't!

Crack!

The sound of the wood raining down on her glowing pink bum was louder now, but not as loud as her cries. After only fifty wallops, the first tears came, each one dripping down Persephone's cheek and bringing a flower to bloom where they landed.

Demeter raised an eyebrow, noting her progress. The cane snapped after 150 wicked strokes. Demeter examined the broken branch, not quite snapped in two, amused. "Perfect timing," she thought. She didn't have the heart to use such a large branch any more, and it had lasted the exact number of strokes needed. However, she had promised Persephone to chastise her for each of her transgressions. Persephone felt guilty, and Demeter knew her daughter was expecting the full punishment.

Demeter felt her resolve weakening a bit. Remembering Persephone's smart-alecky Socratic argument, Demeter steeled her voice and said, "This is for doubting me when I told you that you shouldn't have eaten the food of the underworld and talking back."

Demeter raised her godly hand and this time delivered a hand-spanking to her daughter's deep pink posterior. After fifty swats, Demeter felt her own palm stinging and the guilt held her back. Was this what her daughter was enduring?

Breathing hard, Persephone looked over her shoulder and said wickedly, "What's a'matter, Mom? Is that all you got?"

Demeter's breast filled with mixed emotions: while she was annoyed with her daughter's flippancy, she was proud of Persephone's determination and strength. None too subtly, Persephone was telling her mother not to hold back. "You are being disciplined, little lady. You ought to conduct yourself accordingly. Yours should be a state of contrition and penitence, not hubris. These next swats are just for your cheekiness during your chastisement. After this, we will return to your regular punishment."

Demeter rained down one hundred sizzling spanks with her godly strength, causing the willow tree to sway from the force. Demeter raised her hand and the willow tree provided her with a whole bundle of birch switches, thorny and menacing. A vine shot out of the ground and knotted itself around the bundle, creating a perfect handle. Demeter snatched it and held down her daughter.

It was time to finish this!

"This [Crack!] is [Whack!] for [Smack!] threatening [Whip!] to [Shwack!] eat [Thwack!] the [Shwip!] rest [Crack!] of [Swish!] the [Snip!] pomegranate [Thwackity! Whackity! Whap!] in [Swish!] the [Swish!] underworld [Kathwap! Swish! Thwap!]" She punctuated her admonishment with three hundred exclamation points!

One switch all by itself had been enough to bring the daughter to tears. The combined force of thirty nasty switches would leave welts on even a goddesses' bottom that would not fade for weeks.

Persephone wailed the whole time she was whaled. She didn't feel guilty anymore! *"Okay, Mom, you can stop!"* she thought.

It was lucky her mother was holding her down with all her god-like strength, because the girl was kicking and flailing by the time the uninterrupted wave of pain ended.

Persephone tried unsuccessfully to catch her breath, then gasped, "(Sniff!) Mom, ha- have I been punished enough? I– (hic!) it hurts! My bu-my b-my bottom hurts so much! Waaaah! Aaahaaa-huh-huh!"

Demeter tried to catch her own breath. The sun was setting. They'd been at this for around six hours. But her daughter was old and strong willed. This had still been nothing compared to a typical spanking for a young goddess.

"Persephone, don't you remember? You still made one other defiant retort. When you defended your poor decision by saying you were old enough to decide for yourself? Well, you may be getting older, but it does not logically follow that your decisions will be wise or right because you are older!" (Demeter could cite Socrates too if needed.)

"You are 140 years old, but I will still not hesitate to take you over my knee if you make decisions that put yourself in peril! You are already a remarkably intelligent and resolute young goddess. And I have faith that you'll be capable of making wise decisions when you've fully matured. And that's because you'll always remember that bad decisions will bring you pain. Pain much worse than any you'd ever be able to feel from a spanking!"

"Mom, I–(sniff!) I don't think I can take anymore! I'm sorry! I'm so, so sorry!"

"I know baby, but there's no point to a spanking if you're the one who gets to decide when it ends."

Persephone's lip trembled, and the tears spilled anew from her wide, doe-eyes. Her sentence had been pronounced, and Persephone, doomed to be spanked from dusk until the breaking of dawn, demurely submitted to her doom.

Demeter cleaned off a few snapped twigs. Pointlessly, she patted her daughter's dark pink bottom to prepare her for the final ordeal. "I love you Mom!" shouted Persephone. And began whimpering, "I'm sorry! I'm sorry!"

Once again, Demeter was taken aback by her daughter’s will.

Persephone heard her mother's voice say reassuringly, "I love you too baby."

When she felt the first smack, Persephone shouted "I'm sorry!" instead of crying. This continued for a couple of hours, her volume building until she was screeching "I'm sorry!" By three o'clock in the morning, Persephone's voice cracked and she went quiet. Too tired and physically drained to buck and squirm, she lay peacefully across her mother's lap.

At four o'clock in the morning, Demeter saw that her daughter had actually fallen asleep on her lap, still fitfully twitching and reacting to her punishment which surely filled her dreams.

Demeter spanked her snoozing daughter until six o'clock in the morning. Dawn broke, the birds sang, and Persephone's eyes may have flickered a bit before she dozed off again.

With that, Demeter stopped the spanking. She realized the bundle she had been using for the birching must have broken apart during the night and she had gone back to using her hand again without missing a beat. For the first time, she felt all the pain in her throbbing hand.

Persephone slept soundly on top of her mother's lap. For a short time she rocked back and forth, moaning, clearly reacting to an imaginary spanking in her dreams. Then it stopped and she snoozed peacefully. By ten o'clock, Demeter decided her daughter was being too much of a sleepy head, and promptly woke her up with thirty brisk slaps.

Still groggy, Persephone barely registered this wake up call, but when her mother paused and added an extra twenty with extra strength, Persephone yelped and scrambled off her mother's lap. "Owie!" she growled, rubbing her butt furiously.

Demeter stood up to give her daughter a hug, but the girl beat her mother to the punch, surprising the old goddess by jumping onto her shoulders. With her divine strength, Demeter managed to keep from falling on her own butt, and carried her remarkably cheerful daughter back home.

Now, you've all heard how during the four months of winter, Demeter is miserable and lonely. But spring comes every year when Demeter and Persephone are reunited.

Now you also know why it rains all through April, and flowers bloom in May.

Demeter still has to take her daughter over her knee from time to time, and it may last days, or weeks, or months, but their tears provide rain. Then, the spanking is over and they hug, and the flowers bloom.

Then, the whole summer is blistering hot, and some might say that during the summer months, the sun in the sky is not actually Apollo. Actually, it's Persephone's well-spanked, red-hot bottom on display for the whole world to see.

The End